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A security company boss has accused disgraced actor Kevin Spacey of racism towards his predominantly black employees while on the set of House of Cards.

Earl Blue, 51, boss of VIP Protective Services, was hired by Knight Takes King Productions to manage on-set security during season one filming of the Netflix series in 2012.

He claims Spacey, who played lead character Frank Underwood in House of Cards as well as directing it, refused to acknowledge or shake hands with black team members.



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Earl says the actor questioned why African American guards were watching his trailer and told his personal security manager: "I don't want n\*ggers watching my trailer."

When Earl raised concerns with set managers about Spacey, who was referred to as 'the Powers That Be', he was told: "That's just the way he is; we've got to keep him happy."

And despite producers allegedly telling VIP Protective Services – who previously did security for HBO – they were pleased with their work, the \$1.1 million contract wasn't renewed.

Breaking his four-year silence, dad-of-three Earl, who plans to sue Spacey, claims the fallout resulted in his business, which hires 40 staff, losing millions of dollars in revenue.

One of his employees, supervisor Eric Lyles, 47, supports the allegations and claims Spacey also refused to shake his hand or acknowledge him.

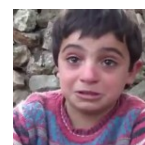
The pair fear dozens more will have suffered discrimination at the hands of the Hollywood star, who has separately been accused of sexual assault by more than a dozen men.

Earl from a Navy veteran who served for 11 years before going into security, who lives with his wife Cheryl, 53, a banker, in Annapolis,



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"I lost faith that I am in the right job after the contract was terminated. I questioned myself for months. What could I have done differently?

"Then I came to the realization that I did everything I was supposed to do, I was just dealing with a racist man.

"I sat on it for four years because I believe in confidentiality but when it comes to the point where people are being harmed, enough is enough.

"I realized he was getting worse and worse."

Earl says he knew he "might have a situation" with Spacey on the first day of filming in Baltimore when he and his black employee, Eric Lyles, were introduced to the actor.

He said: "The locations manager wanted to introduce him to myself and my supervisor for the company and the met police officer who was handling the police situation.

"So Spacey comes out of the trailer and the locations manager says, 'Kevin, I just want to introduce you to the security team.'

"He introduced me, the supervisor and the policeman by name.

"Kevin is standing right next to me. He looks me up and down, looks my supervisor up and down and reaches across us to shake the hand of the police officer and then walks away.

"We are all standing there looking at each other like, 'OK, that was awkward.'

"From that point on we had a security officer posted outside of his trailer and my security force is predominantly African American.

"Every time he walked back he would look at this black officer but he wouldn't even speak.

"He never spoke to my security guards but he was talking to everyone else. He even talked to the location manager that tried to introduce us to start with.

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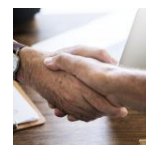
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"He talked to all the police officers, laughing and joking with them.

Earl's employee Eric, a supervisor at VIP Protective Services who has worked in the industry for 17 years, also recalls the alleged incident.

He said: "I always meet the star and see what they're like, what their likes and dislikes are.

"When I went to meet Mr Spacey to say hello to him I went to extend my hand to him to shake his and he didn't want to shake my hand.

"I have never had that problem before."

As company boss, Earl says he would usually position himself next to the main talent, so he was stationed around 15-20ft from Spacey's trailer.

He claims that every time the actor left to go on set, he would lock the door behind him and start to walk away before turning around and checking the door a second time.

Earl, who has a degree in Digital Media Forensics from John Hopkins University, said: "He would look at me, walk back to his trailer and check to make sure the door was locked.

"Over the course of that day I started laughing at him. He did it every single time he left his trailer – at least a dozen times.

"He obviously had some uneasiness about me being near the trailer. I would smile at him and even speak, say 'good morning' or 'good afternoon'. But he would never reply.

"I have experienced this before. I have been black my whole life and I can tell when a person is not looking at me as a person but they are looking at me as a color.

"They are coming to a conclusion about what type of person I am.

"But I'm there to do a job and it doesn't matter if you speak to me, I'm going to do that job. So we kept filming."

Determined to do a good job, Earl claims he regularly changed the guard who was positioned outside Spacey's trailer – but he found other things to complain about.

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Earl says Spacey raised various concerns with his personal security outfit, who acted as a go-between the actor and VIP Protective Services.



*Earl Blue (right) and his business partner William Spencer.*

"He started nit-picking about the uniforms, so we changed the uniforms," he said.

"Then he would have his security come over and ask about a guard: 'Why is that guard over there and not over here?'

"I spoke to the production manager and it was always the same thing; 'That's just the way he is, we've got to make him happy.'"

When the contract came to an end in April 2013, Earl says he was called into a meeting with the location manager, business partner and producer Iain Paterson.

He claims the representatives of Knight Takes King told him they were "really pleased" with VIP Protective Services' handling of season one and that there were "no complaints".

"There was no theft or damage and they were pleased as punch with the work we had done," Earl said.

But Earl says that following a further meeting between production company staff, where Kevin Spacey was present via a phone link, the contract was terminated.

He says a production manager later told him Spacey had announced over speaker that 'he did not want n\*ggers on his set anymore.'

He said: "In the film industry we are a close knit group of people. One of the people called me and told me what Spacey had said.

"We were blown away. He was blown away.

"Two days later I got a call from Iain (Paterson). He was on the phone upset. He said Earl, 'I have some bad news. Unfortunately we are going to have to part ways and not renew the contract.'

"I said, 'What?' He said, 'Unfortunately the contract is being terminated. We need to go in a different direction.'

"In my contract there is a clause for remediation, so we are supposed to sit down and talk about it but he said, 'Unfortunately Earl it is the powers that be.'

"They cut us a check for the next two weeks even though we didn't work.'

"I have been in the industry for almost 20 years. I worked on Oscar nominated movies. My most recent projects include Marvel and Oprah Winfrey.

"But my projects have been few and far between since then. I have got commercials but no real substantial work.

"Since I left that show I have been operating at a loss."

A former employee of Knight Takes King, who asked not to be named, says he has "no particular recollection" of Spacey behaving in a racist manner towards security staff.

However he said Spacey was a "real asshole" who was "temperamental" on set and would "get frustrated" if things didn't go his way.

He said the reason Earl's contract was severed was "never explained," adding: "My understanding was Kevin Spacey wanted the company fired and wanted a new deal.

"It was never explained to me. It was just, 'This is what's going on.'"



Spacey could not be reached for comment. His attorney, Todd Rubenstein, instructed reporters to contact the actor's representatives using an email address, but no response was received.

Producer Iain Paterson, who went on to work on Stranger Things, declined to discuss the allegations but said VIP Protective Services's work was found to be "unsatisfactory".

He added: "I have no idea about any of this. I can't help you."

Netflix declined to comment and directed the inquiry to Media Rights Capital, who handle production for the show. MRC also refused to comment.

A source said: "VIP Protective Services had the set security contract for Season one, when break-ins occurred in both the make-up trailer and Kevin Spacey's trailer.

"The contract for set security was then awarded to Master Security for Season 2-6, yet VIP has continued to bid each year."

Earl denied the claim and said: "There were no break ins. I pride myself on our service and integrity so to hear these lies has struck a cord. No reason was given for terminating the contract."

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### JOE MELLOR

Joe is a freelance journalist who writes news and features for national newspapers and a variety of magazine titles. He studied Economics and Politics at the University of Manchester and also has a Masters in

Journalism from the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

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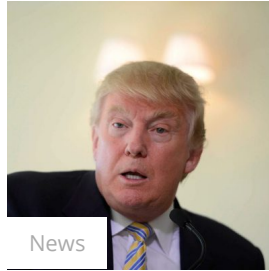
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